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# HISTORICAL DISCOURSE,

PREACHED ON THE SABBATH,

October 16th, 1870,

BEING THE

One Hundred Thirty-Sixth Anniversary

OF THE ORGANIZATION OF THE

Orthodox Congregational Church

OF CHRIST,

IN TOWNSEND, Mass.

BY G. H. MORSS, ACTING PASTOR.



PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

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1870.





*Townsend, Nov. 10, 1870.*

REV. GEO. H. MORSS,

DEAR SIR:—At a special meeting of the Orthodox Congregational Church of Christ in Townsend, it was

*Voted*, To choose a committee, and instruct them to request of you a copy of your very acceptable discourse—giving us a condensed history of said church—to be published at our expense, for distribution and circulation among the members of the Church and Congregation, to be held in our esteem as a memento of the past, and kept for our children as a “Memorial” of this “Jubilee year of the Pilgrims.” We avail ourselves of this opportunity to tender to you the assurance of our sympathy and cordial regards.

Very respectfully, your friends,

JOHN PROCTOR,  
S. S. HAYNES, } *Committee.*  
S. F. WARREN.

To Dea. J. PROCTOR, S. S. HAYNES, S. F. WARREN. *Committee.*

GENTLEMEN:—Your letter containing a vote of the Church requesting a copy of the Historical discourse delivered on the 136th Anniversary of the Orthodox Congregational Church in Townsend, with a view of publication, is received. When the sermon was prepared it was without thought of any such thing as you propose, But if you regard the facts contained therein worthy of preservation, the manuscript is cheerfully at your disposal.

With kindest regards,

Your friend and pastor,

G. H. MORSS.



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## DISCOURSE.

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"WE HAVE HEARD WITH OUR EARS, O GOD. OUR FATHERS HAVE TOLD US, WHAT WORK THOU DIDST IN THEIR DAYS, IN THE TIMES OF OLD.—*Psaln* 44: 1.

It is one of the glories of children to be able to refer to an illustrious ancestry, and to talk over the deeds of their fathers in "the olden time;" and the frequent rehearsal of those deeds. makes the memory of the fathers blessed to the children.

The memory of a devout christian ancestry, is one of the noblest legacies bequeathed to any family of children. And where there has been a community of such ancestors, their memory must be priceless to their descendants.

'Tis thus we hold dear all that pertains to the Pilgrim fathers, and to their descendants, who like them favored and perpetuated the institutions of religion which they established; and the noblest of these, is the Christian Church.

The history of the early churches established in our State, is full of interest, and its rehearsal seldom fails to awaken lively emotions of gratitude and praise to the God of the fathers, for his wonderful love as manifested towards them.

This day being the 136th Anniversary of the formation of this Church of Christ, I have thought it befitting to make it the occasion of a review of somewhat of this Church's history; and to this end, I have for many week's been conversant with the writings of the fathers. and have conversed with aged members of the



Church and Congregation ; the result of which, has been the gathering of a few facts of deep interest to me, and though not new to many of you, their rehearsal will not, I trust, prove uninteresting.

To a most wise provision made by the Puritan fathers in the first settlement of our State, are we indebted for the privileges of religious worship enjoyed in all our towns to-day.

Every town at its incorporation was allowed an act of incorporation, only on condition that the inhabitants should secure among them, and make provision for, the settlement of a "learned Orthodox minister." If such a minister was not settled within two years, and provision made "for his comfortable and honorable support," the act of incorporation was to be void.

Each town was obliged to set off four lots of 250 acres each, for ministerial and educational interests. One lot for the "first settled gospel minister, a good convenient lot ;" also a "ministerial lot," a lot for schools, and a lot for Harvard College.

The first settlers were also obliged within four years after the settlement of the town, to build a convenient house for the worship of God.

This town was laid out about the year 1720, and twelve years after had become sufficiently filled with inhabitants, to make application to the General Court for an act of incorporation.

In accordance with these requirements by law of the State, the inhabitants of Townsend, soon after they were gathered as a township took measures for the erection of a building to be used for the public worship of God. This building, small and somewhat rude in its construction, yet adapted at that time for the



purpose for which it was built, was located on the hill east of us, known as "meeting-house hill." There on the Sabbath were gathered together a small company, probably not above fifty persons, who occasionally enjoyed the services of a preacher, obtained from the Divinity School of Harvard University.

After one or two years spent in listening to occasional preaching, and within the time specified by law, and after two unsuccessful attempts, they were able, June 4, 1734, to settle upon a young man whom they desired to be their gospel minister, Mr. Phinehas Hemenway, who had but four years previous graduated from Harvard University. To him they extended a call, offering him a salary of £100 the first year, and an increase of five pounds yearly till it should reach £130; also £100 towards his settlement in housekeeping, &c.

This call Mr. Hemenway accepted on condition that the town would make his salary secure in case of depreciation of the currency. For it was a time when this State was but a province, dependant upon the mother country, and beginning to manifest an unwilling dependance at that, and there was prospect of a depreciation in the value of money, then in use. The pastor thus in his foresightedness, was but following the injunction of scripture in "providing for his own house."

The town cheerfully acceded to the request of the pastor elect, and assured him by vote, that his salary should be at "the rate of twenty-five shillings per ounce of silver, and should increase or decrease as silver should vary in value with the goldsmiths and merchants in Boston."

The salary at that time, as money was reckoned, was less than \$150.00. Mr. Hemenway accepting the in-





vation from the town on these assurances, came to be settled over them in the autumn of 1734.

A sufficient number of christians being gathered, they were on Wednesday, the 16th day of October, 1734, one hundred and thirty-six years ago to-day, organized into a church, and on the same day Mr. Hemenway was ordained their gospel minister, being but twenty-eight years of age.

Sixteen persons, all males, signed the church covenant, among them their pastor.

The language of this covenant indicates deep toned piety, and an earnest desire to promote Christ's kingdom by the establishment of the ordinances of a pure gospel among them, emanating only from the Lord Jesus Christ, as its centre and source. And from this covenant we learn the character of those early fathers, as devout, holy men, walking humbly with God. This church covenant ought to be printed and kept in every family as a choice memento of the faith of the fathers of this church and of this town, whose faith you well may follow.

Here it is:

"We, whose names are hereunto subscribed, inhabitants of y<sup>e</sup> Town of Townshend in New England apprehending ourselves called of God into the church state of the Gospel, do first of all confess ourselves unworthy to be so highly favoured of the Lord, and admire that free and rich grace of His which triumphs over so great unworthiness, and in humble dependence on free grace for Divine assistance and acceptance, do in the name of our





Lord Jesus Christ freely covenant to bind ourselves solemnly in the presence of God himself, His holy angels, and all His servants here present :

1. That we will choose and take y<sup>e</sup> Lord Jehovah to be our God. And we promise depending upon y<sup>e</sup> grace of God for assistance, to fear Him, to cleave to Him in love, and to serve Him in truth with our hearts, giving up ourselves to be His in all things ; to be at his direction and disposal, that we may love and hold communion with Him, as members of Christ's mystical body, according to His revealed will, to our lives' end.

2. That we will bring up our children and servants in the knowledge and fear of God, by His holy instruction according to our best abilities, and in special by the use of Orthodox Catechisms, that the true religion may be maintained in our families while we live, yea and among such as shall live when we are dead and gone.

3. That we will keep close to the truth of Christ contained in the sacred scriptures ; endeavouring with godly zeal to defend it against all opposers thereof, as God shall call us at any time ; and we therefore resolve to take the Scriptures as our *sole rule* and guide in all things, and not the *unscriptural* inventions of men.

4. That we will have a careful inspection over our own hearts, so as to endeavour by the virtue of the



death of Christ, the mortification of all our sinful passions, worldly frames, and disorderly affections whereby we may be withdrawn from the living God.

5. That we will faithfully improve our abilities and opportunities to worship God according to the institutions of Christ for his Church, under the gospel administration, as continually and reverently to attend upon y<sup>e</sup> public worship of God, and to have communion with our fellow-members in the use of both the seals of the covenant of grace, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper.

6. That we will peaceably submit to the holy discipline enjoyed by Christ in his Church for offenders : and we also engage that we will obey those that rule over us in the Lord.

7. That we will walk in love towards our fellow-members endeavouring their edification; visiting, exhorting, comforting, (as occasion serveth,) and any brother or sister walking disorderly, not divulging private offences irregularly, but heedfully the precepts laid down by Christ for church dealing in Matt. chap. xviii, verses 15, 16, 17, willingly forgiving all that witnesseth to the judgment of charity that they truly repent.

How faithfully the fathers acted in accordance with this covenant, their subsequent history fully evinces. Two months after the church was formed, its organization was fully completed by the choice of two deacons, Joseph Stevens and Isaac Spalding.



At the same time the first woman was received into church fellowship.—Mrs. Mehitable Crosby, from the South Church in Andover. Her example was soon followed by nearly all the wives of the male members of the church. During the pastorate of Mr. Hemenway, twenty-six and a half years, the church increased from 16 to 79.

Mr. Hemenway was held in high esteem by the church and people of the town. At his decease he was buried in the old burial ground, at the foot of meeting house hill, where lie many of the ancient and honored dead of the town.

A stone marking the spot was erected by the town, on which is inscribed as follows :

ERECTED BY THE TOWN,  
TO THE MEMORY OF THE  
REV. MR. PHINEHAS HEMENWAY,  
THE FIRST PASTOR OF THE CHURCH HERE,  
Who departed this life May 20, 1760,  
AGED 55,  
In the 27th year of his Ministry.

He was sound in the faith, zealous in the cause of God, meek  
and patient under trials, diligent in improving his talents,  
faithful to his Lord, and to the souls of his people.

*From death's arrows, no age or station is free.*

The second pastor, Rev. Samuel Dix, was also a graduate of Harvard University in the year 1758. He was a native of Reading, Mass. He was ordained March 4, 1761, the year following the death of Mr. Hemenway. He too was a young man—but twenty-five years of age—an active, zealous minister of the





gospel, who, beside performing the duties of his parish in Townsend, performed also very much missionary work in the neighboring towns, which were destitute of stated preaching. Among the towns he thus visited doing pastoral work, was Ashby in this State, a place called No. 1, Sliptown, Raby (now Brookline,) Jeffrey, Mason, Limerick and Hancock in New Hampshire.

Mr. Dix was a very successful pastor, and was very much beloved by the people of this and adjoining towns where he performed pastoral labor.

Rev. Mr. Farrar of New Ipswich, N. H., who preached his funeral sermon, says of him, that he bore "the character of a sincere christian, an upright and faithful man, who shone peculiarly in the virtues of meekness, patience, humility and self-denial." He was not a well man, but of feeble constitution, and almost habitually subject to infirmities of the body; notwithstanding this, "he seldom failed of performing the customary duties of the pulpit." His method of preaching was plain, yet accompanied with "earnestness and pathos of address." "His acquaintance with the Scriptures, and his own experience of religion, and sense of its importance, led him to arrange his discourses in such a way as would have the most likely tendency to reach the heart, to awaken secure sinners, and excite them to believe and turn to the Lord." To his faithful preaching he added what was most effective as a witness for Jesus, "a meek, prayerful, inoffensive and exemplary life."

Mr. Dix continued pastor of the church thirty-six years.

After his death the town also erected a stone marking his grave in the old burial ground, on which is inscribed as follows :



## ERECTED BY THE TOWN

TO THE MEMORY OF

REV. MR. SAMUEL DIX,

The Second Pastor of the Church of Christ in Townsend,  
who departed this life Nov. 12, 1797,

In the 62d year of his age, and the 36th year of his ministry.

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He was sound in the faith, a lover of souls; humble, meek and patient  
under trials, kind, charitable and benevolent to all.

Then following, as coming from the lips of the silent  
pastor, is the address to his loving people.

"Ye living mortals, take a solemn view  
Of this, my silent, dark and long abode,  
Remember, you were born like me to die,  
Therefore prepare to meet the righteous God."

During the thirty-six years of Mr. Dix's pastorate,  
he received into the church 188.

A little more than two years after the death of Mr. Dix, Rev. David Palmer was ordained as the third pastor of the church, Jan 1. 1800. He was born in Windham, Conn, 1768. Was graduated at Dartmouth College, 1797. The memory of his pastorate is still fresh in the minds of the older members of the church and congregation. He was dismissed July, 1830, but retained his connection with the church until his death, Feb. 15, 1849, aged 81. Mr. Palmer was a faithful, zealous pastor, as is seen in the fact that during the thirty and a half years of his pastorate, the church enjoyed several seasons of spiritual refreshing, and he was permitted to receive into this church 250 persons, sixty-two of them in one year, the year 1826.

Connected with the duties of the Pastor he joined that of the teacher. Having taught the Academy at New Ipswich, N. H. before he was called to the pas-



torate of this church, he continued the work of fitting young men for college, as was customary by many pastors of that day. Very many of those fitted for college under his care, subsequently filled important positions in the clerical, medical and legal profession.

The pastors succeeding Mr. Palmer have been seven in number.

Rev. William M. Rogers, a native of England, who came to this country when ten years of age, was graduated at Harvard University in 1827, at Andover Theological Seminary 1830, ordained fourth pastor of this church, Feb. 16, 1831, dismissed July 2, 1835.

Rev. Columbus Shumway, a native of Belchertown, Mass. a graduate of Union College, and of Auburn Theological Seminary, was installed fifth pastor of the church, January 6th, 1836; was dismissed March 28, 1837.

Rev. David Stowell, the sixth pastor, was born at Westmoreland, N. H. Dec. 29, 1804, was graduated at Dartmouth College, 1829, installed pastor June 28, 1837, was dismissed August 15, 1843.

Rev. Luther H. Sheldon, a graduate of Middlebury College, 1839, and of Andover Theological Seminary, 1842, was ordained seventh pastor. August 1, 1844. was dismissed March 7, 1856.

Rev. E. W. Cook, a graduate of Yale College, 1837, was installed the eighth pastor of the church, April 28, 1858, was dismissed Oct. 12, 1856.

Rev. Moses Patten, a graduate of Dartmouth College, 1850, of Andover Theological Seminary, 1855, was ordained the ninth pastor, June 7, 1860, was dismissed April 27, 1863.





Rev. George Williams, was installed tenth pastor, May 1, 1867, was dismissed Feb. 1, 1869.

The admissions to the Church since Rev. Mr. Palmer's day have been 529 making a total during the 136 years of 1,021.

The number of Infant Baptisms we are not able to ascertain. During the pastorate of Mr. Hemenway and Mr. Dix, there were 1,041 in this town beside many performed in other towns where the pastors were accustomed to hold occasional meetings. During Mr. Palmer's pastorate, 283 were baptized.

Of late years no account has been kept of the number or names of persons baptized, or at least I have not seen any such record. The ordinance has not, I am happy to say, fallen wholly into disuse, but is still revered and honored by many of the descendants of the fathers, and I trust will ever be as one of the sacred, time honored, divinely approved rites of the Christian Church.

This Church has experienced and enjoyed very many seasons of religious interest.

The years of 1811, 1815, 1826, 1831, 1834, 1839, 1842, 1847-8, 1852, 1864, will long be remembered as emphatically "years of the right hand of the Most High. Almost every year since the church was organized has witnessed more or less additions. In 1826 there were added sixty-two. At the communion in July, 1839, forty-four were received. In May, 1842, sixty-eight were admitted."

The revivals of 1832 and 1834, were preceded by days of special prayer, and were in connection with protracted meetings. That of 1832 in connection with what were then known as four days meetings.





The present number connected with the church is 230. Males, 72, Females, 158. Of these there are absentees, 32, leaving resident members, 198.

#### DEACONS.

The church has had during its one hundred and thirty-six years, fifteen deacons, chosen as follows :

- 1734. Joseph Stevens.  
Isaac Spaulding.
- 1738. Samuel Clark.
- 1763. Jonathan Stow.
- 1773. Richard Wyer.
- 1778. James Hosley.
- 1782. Jonathan Wheelock.  
Daniel Adams.
- 1812. John Giles.  
John Boutell.
- 1824. Joel Adams.
- 1828. Daniel Giles.  
Samuel Walker.
- 1845. John Spaulding.  
John Proctor.

Of the characteristics of these men as officers of the church little is recorded. the memory of many of them is still fresh, and endearing to the hearts of this people. Of most of them doubtless the record might be written as of Jonathan Stow who died in 1780.

"He used the office of deacon well and purchased to himself a good degree and boldness in the faith."

#### FOUNDERS OF THE CHURCH.

The names of the original founders of the church who signed the covenant Oct. 16, 1734, are as follows :



Phinehas Hemenway,	Joseph Stevens,
Wm Clark,	John Stevens,
James McDonald,	John Wallis,
John Slowan,	Benj. Taylor,
Nathaniel Taylor,	Daniel Taylor,
Joseph Baldwin,	Samuel Manning,
Jacob Baldwin,	Samuel Clark,
Isaac Spaulding,	Jeremiah Ball.

The descendents of two of these still remain in the church, those of Isaac Spaulding and Jeremiah Ball.

#### MEETING HOUSES.

During the one hundred and thirty-six years of the church's existence it has occupied three houses of worship. The first was built sometime before the town was incorporated ; as the first town meeting July 12, 1732, twelve days after its incorporation, was held in the meeting-house, though the building was incomplete.

Sept. 18, 1732, the town voted "to build a pulpit in the meeting-house and some body seats." And three months after the ordination of the pastor the town again voted, Jan. 14, 1735, "to lay out the pew ground in the meeting-house ;" and subsequently, "to build a ministerial pew."

In 1766, "a cushion was furnished for the desk."

Thirty years or more after this first house was built, it needed repairs, and the town voted, Sept. 28, to have it plastered and whitewashed, but subsequently rescinded the vote; probably thinking it would be better to build a new house as the old one doubtless, owing to the increased size of the congregation, was getting to be too small for their accomodation.

The matter was talked over and finally a vote of the



town was secured May 24, 1769, to build a new meeting-house thirty feet north of where the old one stood, the size to be fifty-five by forty-five feet.

This house was completed probably in 1770, or nearly so, though Mar. 2, 1772, we find a vote to have it painted; and Oct. 18, 1773 the town voted to provide handsome door steps, at the entrance of the meeting-house. These two houses were located on Meeting-House Hill, a little less than a mile east of the centre, on the top of a hill a little north of the house occupied by Mr. B. F. Lewis.

The parsonage\* given to the town by Lieut. Amos Whitney in 1770 and subsequently occupied by Rev. Mr. Dix and Mr. Palmer, stands west of the site of the old meeting-house.

Twenty-eight years after this second house was built, it was proposed to remove the meeting-house to the centre. After considerable delay the removal was effected in the year 1804 and the meeting-house was located on the hill on the west side of the common where it now stands. The house was remodelled and occupied by the church until 1829, the period of the separation from the Unitarians, when the brick meeting-house was built, completed and dedicated in June, 1830, to the worship of the Triune God.

#### SEPARATION.

For ninety-six years previous to the year 1830 the church was known simply as the "Church of Christ in Townsend." At this period the Unitarian controversy had entered into the churches and in almost every town had developed so much of strength as to cause and ne-

\*Note 2.





cessitate a division of the church. In this place the Unitarian party had become so strong as to crowd out the Orthodox element so that in the early part of the year 1829 the Unitarians took possession of the property of the church, and the members of this church withdrew and immediately took measures to erect a new church edifice.

For a time they occupied the school house and subsequently for a year, the hall over the brick store, where Rev. Mr. Palmer gathered his faithful flock about him and preached to them the truth as it is in Jesus.

The parting from the old meeting-house where were so many endearing associations, is described by those who remember the scene, as a very sorrowful and tearful one.

Coming into the church one sabbath morning, the pastor found that the Unitarians had procured their champion, Rev. Dr. Thayer of Lancaster, and put him in his place. Walking up front of the pulpit, Mr. Palmer turned and publicly addressed his people, stating that he felt the pulpit by right belonged to him, but as another had been put in his place, he should not contend with him, nor should he countenance error by remaining. He declared his purpose to retire to the school house and such as should follow him, he would preach to there. Immediately as the pastor left the house, he was followed by his flock like the faithful sheep who knew the voice of their shepherd, till not one member of the church remained behind, and not one of the singers forming the choir.

Thus nobly and firmly did this band of Christ's followers witness against error and for the truth as Jesus taught it. The pastor preached to his flock that first



sabbath from the text Nehemiah 6, 11, "Should such a man as I, flee ; and who is there, that being as I am, would go into the temple to save his life ; I will not go in." An examination of this text with the verses following and a consideration of the use at this time made of them, will reveal the words to have been aptly chosen by the pastor.

In consequence of this controversy and separation from the Unitarians, it was "thought proper and expedient in view of all circumstances that the church should be organized more distinctly than had heretofore been done." The only officers of the church previous to this, were pastor and two deacons. The pastor had usually kept the books and papers and recorded all the doings of the church. Now it was decided by vote of the church, Feb. 8, 1830, to choose a clerk to keep exact records of all their proceedings at church meetings worthy of note ; also a treasurer, to receive and pay out all monies belonging to the church and a committee to manage their prudential concerns.

The officers then chosen were :

Joel Adams, clerk; Samuel Stone, treasurer; Cushing Wilder, auditor ; Joel Adams, Joel Spaulding, Elnathan Davis, Prudential Committee.

The church at this time assumed the distinct name of The Orthodox Congregational Church of Christ in Townsend.

The parish society was organized March 23, 1830.

#### MEETINGS.

The only meetings enjoyed by the fathers in the earliest days of the church were the two services of the sabbath. By the ringing of the bell the early inhabi-



tants of this town were called together in their little sanctuary on the hill. When they were assembled, the youthful pastor opened the service by invoking the blessing of God upon them and read a selection of scripture, expounding the same or giving the sense, that the people might understand it, according to Neh. VIII, 8. This was followed by the long prayer and the singing of a psalm interlined by the pastor. Then followed a lengthy discussion of doctrinal truth, the service closing with prayer and benediction. The afternoon service was similarly conducted, the sermon ordinarily being the practical application or improvement of the morning discourse. The rite of Infant Baptism was usually administered every sabbath; probably before the sermon in the afternoon.

The intermission between service was usually spent in the meeting-house or in some of the houses near by, or in what were known as "Sabbath-Day" or noon-houses,\* where they engaged in private discussion of the topics of the morning discourse, or scripture reading, or in the personal reading and study of God's word.

The public services were enlivened and spiritualized by the singing of the Psalms of David arranged in metrical form. This was probably a translation into verse made by the chief divines of the country, who each took a portion to translate.

The editorship chiefly devolving upon Mr. Welde and John Eliot the apostle to the Indians and Mr. Mather of Dorchester. It was printed in Cambridge in 1640 and was the first book published in New England.

\*Note 3.





This edition was subsequently revised by Mr. Dunster of Harvard College, and was "long in use among our churches having passed through more than twenty editions, and was reluctantly exchanged by some congregations only after the American Revolution."<sup>3</sup> It was used by this church until January, 1770, when, by vote of the church, Dr. Watts' Psalms and Hymns were introduced, "to be sung in conjunction with the old version of the Psalms publicly in the congregation." This is the same book with additions that we use to-day.

Few singing books were probably possessed by the early worshippers. The pastor and those singing had copies of the Hymn or Psalm book, therefore the necessity for the custom for many years pursued in the church of the reading by the pastor of the psalm, line by line, while the congregation or choir sung. Nearly twenty years after the introduction of Watts' Hymns this plan was pursued.

Then there began to be a more general multiplication of Hymn Books and consequently a feeling that the reading of the hymn was unnecessary. Singing also began to be scientifically taught, and there began to be manifest dissatisfaction with the introduction by the choir, (which had been formed previous to this) of new tunes in the singing of the hymns and psalms.

This began to be so much a matter of discussion that it was deemed advisable at a church meeting held July 2, 1789, to choose a committee "to consult upon the method of singing in public.

This committee subsequently reported that they "should sing in public *without* reading the hymn in the

\*Rev. Dr. Budington's History of First Church, Charlestown.



afternoon of each sabbath, and *with* reading line by line in the forenoon." They also recommended to the church and congregation "to furnish themselves with psalm books," also that in singing, "old tunes be sung in the forenoon of each sabbath, and liberty be given for singing new ones in the afternoon"; also it was left with the Pastor "to determine how many times they should sing each Lord's Day in public." Brother Asa Heald and Brother Daniel Holt who previously had led in the singing were desired by vote of the church, "to continue their lead in public singing."

This license granted to introduce new tunes in the afternoon worship, led to the introduction of select pieces which seem to have given offence to some who could not bear any departure from the course the fathers pursued, and who felt they were in danger of departing from the method of worship sanctioned in the Bible. Three years after the above vote was passed therefore, these disaffected ones petitioned to have a church meeting called, in which they say, "our singing in public worship is not conducted, in our opinion, agreeable to the Word of God nor to the edifying of the church." At this meeting it was decided there should be some change effected, and a committee consisting of the pastor, one of the choristers, Mr. Heald and two others were chosen to consider "what method should be adopted in reading and singing in public."

This committee subsequently reported "that they had conversed together upon the method of singing in public, and agreed that those tunes which are most offensive to the aggrieved brethren be omitted in public worship except on particular occasions, but as to reading the Psalm, they did not agree upon any alteration."



Thus harmony was restored.

In October, 1786, the necessity for other meetings than those on the sabbath being felt, for spiritual edification, it was decided by vote of the church to have a monthly meeting on the last Friday afternoon of each month.

This meeting probably partaking somewhat of the nature of a lecture from the Pastor and prayer and conference by the brethren.

Parents were accustomed to instruct their children at home on the sabbath in the bible and catechism. As early however as 1816 sabbath schools for bible instruction began to be introduced in our State in connection with the service of the sanctuary.

We find as early as 1820, or 1822, such schools were held on the sabbath in the district school houses of this town conducted by Dea. Walker and others. In the spring of 1823 Bro. Ezra Blood, who had been connected with a sabbath school in Ashby, suggested the forming of such a school here after a constitution which had been adopted by the Ashby Sabbath School. This was done and forty or fifty signed the constitution and became active members of the school. The first school consisted of nine classes, four of boys and five of girls. The first teachers were Deacons Adams, Walker, Emery, Boytell, Giles, Messrs. Marshall Lewis, Daniel Adams and Ezra Blood. Dea. Joel Adams was the first superintendent appointed by the committee.

The studies of the school were in the New Testament, Westminster Assembly's Shorter Catechism, McDonnell's Bible Questions and Watts' Hymns. For a lesson each scholar took thirty bible questions, more if he wished. Each scholar was noted for the number of questions answered.





On account of the difficulty of getting together in the winter season, the school was then omitted, continuing only from early spring till winter set in.

The first year of the school, so much interest was manifested in bible study, that not alone on the sabbath were they confined to this, but the young men formed a class which met every Saturday evening for the study of the bible, thus preparing themselves for teaching on the sabbath.

Says one, referring to this first year of the school, "I obtained more bible knowledge then than at any other time in my life."

After the withdrawal from the old house, and until the completion of the brick church, the sabbath school was continued at the hall over the store.

Says one who was connected with it at that time, "my remembrance of the sabbath school as then held, is now very clear and very pleasant. The teachers I remember, and the spirit if not the letter of their instructions is still a power with me. Those who held the place of teachers are now mostly dead, as well as a large part of those who were scholars. But I have had occasion always and ever to be grateful that I was thus early called into this sabbath school." Present number in school about 160.

In March, 1831 after the settlement of Mr. Rogers, a third service on the sabbath was instituted in the form of a Bible class, held sabbath evenings. Seven years after prayer meetings began to be held once a month in the vestry.

The present weekly prayer meeting originated in 1846 at the suggestion of the pastor, Rev. Mr. Sheldon.



## CHURCH WORK.

From the beginning, this church has had in it the elements of a working church, and has ever adopted those methods for spiritual growth which were commensurate with christian prudence. Thus in October, 1819, to meet the spiritual wants of the community we find the members of this church organized into a Tract Society acting in connection with other societies formed in the adjoining towns, and as auxilliary to the American Tract Society of Boston. Through the agency of this society a regular system of tract distribution was carried on for ten years when for some reason not mentioned the society ceased to exist.

In October, 1830, we find a committee appointed to ascertain the destitution of bibles in families through the town, with a view of providing one for each family; also a committee to look after the poor.

Quite early we find this church enlisted in the great work of temperance reform. There began to be signs of the evils of intemperance manifest among the members of the church so that, March 6th, 1835, the church resolved:

That total abstinence from ardent spirits as a drink, should be an indispensable condition of admission to the church. And the same year a committee was appointed in each district of the town to see if each member of the church would pledge total abstinence from ardent spirits as a drink. How successful this committee were in their mission does not appear.

Another method of promoting moral and religious instruction in the community was by means of a church library; which owes its conception and origin to Lieut. Jacob Blodget who during the latter part of Mr. Dix's



ministry was appointed scribe of the church, and who had previously served the church in important matters. Still interested for the spiritual prosperity of the church at his decease he left fifty dollars to be appropriated to the purchase of suitable books for a church library. This library was established in 1810. An addition was made to it the same year through the legacy of Capt. Sartell. This library composed of Historical, Theological, and other valuable religious works indicated the taste of the fathers for solid reading. The library is still in existence, though at present unused.

The church at present is organized under a voluntary system of church work, having responsibilities for the spiritual welfare of those not cared for by other denominations in different parts of the town. Eight committees compose this working body and each member is invited to co-operate with some one of these committees, if willing, embracing labor in various departments as follows: care and relief of sick, attention to strangers, promotion of temperance, sabbath school, and various kinds of missionary work. This system we believe if heartily entered into by all the members of the church, will form a means of effectually employing all the working talent of the church, and of hopefully extending the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom among us.

#### LEGACIES.

There is frequent evidence that this church has been held in high esteem by those who have held life-long connection with it, who have passed through its scenes of persecution and trial. One evidence of this is seen in its frequent legacies received from members who dying in the faith, as a last act of life have left to this





church small sums of money, tokens of their good will, and desire through this channel to perpetuate the blessings of the gospel of Christ.

Among these legacies, in addition to those of Lieut. Blodgett and Capt. Sartell, already mentioned, we may mention one from Simeon Green given about the year 1810, also appropriated to the library; one from Dea. Daniel Adams of one hundred dollars given in 1830.

One recently, 1870, from Miss Gracie Farmer of two hundred dollars.

We have now reviewed some of the many facts of interest connected with the history of this Church of Christ. We have chosen to select the bright spots and encouraging items, to recall those where the associations are hallowed, and the memory is pleasing; believing, that whatever is otherwise, is sufficiently impressed upon the memory to need no rehearsal, or if forgotten may well remain so.

It is impossible that a church so large as this should exist in this lower sphere where men are not wholly sanctified, without having some difficulties arising from differences of opinion with regard to church matters. It is not therefore surprising that during the long period of this church's history, one hundred and thirty-six years, it should have experienced quite its share of trial with offending members and erring ministers, for they too are but human. There is however this pleasing record, that during the whole of Mr. Hemenway's pastorate, the first twenty-seven years of the church's existence, only *one* case of discipline was brought before the church.

During Mr. Dix's pastorate, thirty-six years, only eight cases, six only of whom were suspended, two restored.



One reason for this prosperous condition of the church during the first sixty years of its history, we are willing to believe was because the brethren and sisters kept vividly in mind that holy covenant, and the obligations they had there entered into with the Lord and with each other, and they endeavored to live so that discipline would be unnecessary.

Another reason may be found in the fact that during the third year of Mr. Dix's pastorate, a committee of investigation was chosen whose duty it was "to examine complaints and cases of difference, difficulty and uneasiness among members previous to their coming under the consideration of the church, to endeavor if possible, to make peace by bringing such matters to a gospel issue or settlement," and such cases as must come before the church were duly prepared and presented by this committee.

This committee consisted of the pastor, two deacons, with two of the brethren, five in all.

It is a matter worthy of consideration whether the existence of this committee may not well be revived.

This fact is worthy of note that this church in its labor with offending parties has conducted itself in accordance with the rules laid down in the 18th chapter of Matthew, which the church has ever regarded as the authority of Christ, the great Head of the Church.

In concluding this already too long discourse let me call your attention, briefly by way of improvement, to a few facts, here brought forth, which should be cause of thankfulness on this anniversary day.

1. It is a matter of devout thanksgiving to God, that this church has had among its pastors many devo-



ted, christian men under whose ministry they have greatly prospered.

The pastorate of the first three ministers covers a period of ninety-three years and indicates stability both on the part of pastors and people; also unwavering confidence on the part of the church and town in their religious teachers, and unceasing faithfulness on the part of pastors in their spiritual work, and to such faithful devotion of pastor and people, we should expect just such reward as the success which we see attended their labors.

2. It is a matter for thanksgiving that this church has had so many devout, holy men who have filled the office of deacon, as we believe, to the honor and glory of God, and to the eminent satisfaction of those composing the church, and to the commendation of the christian name in the community where they dwelt.

3. It is a matter for thanksgiving that this church has contained among its members so many devout christians whose whole aim has been to honor Christ, by the devotion of their lives and their substance in his service, seeking to build up this particular branch of Zion which they loved.

The fields, the woods, the barns once belonging to these christian fathers have been hallowed spots where has been often heard the voice of prayer and praise ascending to God.

4. It is a matter for devout thankfulness that God has through the instrumentality of his servants and the faithful, earnest pleading of His people, vouchsafed to this church and community such rich, spiritual blessings as they have repeatedly experienced in those





many years of refreshing when the church was permitted to receive such numerical and spiritual strength.

5. It is a matter for thankfulness to God that He permits us to see this anniversary day, coming also in a year so full of interest to Congregationalists as the two hundred fiftieth anniversary of the landing of the Pilgrims and which we are seeking to make a memorial year. And that we are permitted under so pleasant auspices to review the history of this church of the descendants of the Pilgrims, and to cherish the hope that this church of Christ, so dear to the fathers, still dear to their children, will be held dear by the children's children through yet many generations.

Let us thank God to-day for the hope of the gospel, which have been the joy and strength of those already gone from this church militant, to the church triumphant, and which are still the ground of our consolation in Christ Jesus, for this life, and the life to come.

Let us thank God to-day for whatever of prosperity He has granted in the past, and gather new courage and hope for the future prosperity of this Zion; and may this day witness a new consecration of our hearts and lives to the God of our fathers, in the one great work, more noble than all the others, of building up Christ's kingdom of peace in this community, among these our brethren and friends. And may God add His abundant blessing to every effort put forth to this end, through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.



## NOTE 1.

Among those fitted for college, under Mr. Palmer while pastor of this church, belonging to this town, are the following:

Joel Giles, subsequently a professor in Harvard College.	
John Giles,	Rev. Joseph Walker,
Walter Mulliken, M. D.	Dr. Reed,
Rev. Hosea Ball,	Dr. Manning,
Rev. G. Graham,	Dr. Thaddeus Spaulding.

Among those from other towns:

Rev. Bancroft Hill, of Mason,  
 Rev. Brown Stow, of Marlboro.  
 Rev. Israel Jones, of "  
 Boynton Hill, Lawyer, Mason.  
 Philip Sweetser, " Westminster.  
 Clough R. Miles, " "  
 Dr. Wright, Pepperell.

## NOTE 2.

## PARSONAGE.

The house now occupied by Israel H. Spaulding, was built for Rev. Mr. Dix, which he occupied until he moved into the parsonage given the town by Lieut. Amos Whitney in 1770.

In addition to the house there was given a large farm connected with it, besides personal property and a sum of money for support of schools.

Mr. Whitney being a bachelor his heirs at law contested the will by which this property was conveyed to the town. The result was the establishing and confirming the town's legal right to the property.

It was then voted by the town, "that the use of the parsonage be given to Mr. Dix so long as he continued the minister of the town, provided he should give up so much money as the suit in defense cost."

Mr. Dix acquiescing with this provision of the town, took possession of the parsonage and occupied it till his decease.

The house with the other church property passed into the hands of the Unitarians at the time of the separation, and by them was subsequently sold.

In the front north chamber of this house, it is said that Daniel Webster fitted for college, under the tuition of Rev. Mr. Palmer.

## NOTE 3.

## "SABBA-DAY" OR NOON HOUSES.

Before the invention of stoves, it was very desirable after attending service in a cold meeting-house to have some place during the intermission where they could go to warm themselves and eat

\* This is ascertained not to be the fact.



their lunch. For this purpose what are called "Sabba-day" or noon houses were built.

These houses consisted of four rooms ten or twelve feet square, with a fire-place in each room. They were generally built at the united expense of four or more persons, to be occupied only on the sabbath by their families and such guests as they invited to join with them.

One of these houses still remains on the north side of the common, now owned and occupied by Miss Hannah Seaver.

Dry fuel was kept on hand ready for kindling fire, and usually a barrel of cider for each family was placed in the cellar.

"On the morning of the sabbath, the owner of each room deposited in his saddle-bags the necessary refreshment for himself and family and took an early start for the sanctuary. He first called at his noon-house, built a fire, deposited his luncheon, warmed himself and family, and at the hour of worship, they were all ready to sally forth and to shiver in the cold during the morning service at the house of worship. At noon they returned to their noon-house, with invited friends, where a warm room received them. The saddle-bags were now brought forth and their contents discharged on the table, of which all partook a little." Then each in turn drank from the pitcher or mugs of cider which had been brought from the cellar. This service being performed and thanks returned, the remaining time was spent in reading notes and discussing the morning sermon, a chapter from the Bible or from some other book of a religious character; not unfrequently prayer was offered before retiring again to the sanctuary for the afternoon worship. At the close of the services of the afternoon, if the weather was severely cold, the family returned to the noon-house to warm them before going home. The fires were then extinguished, the saddle-bags gathered up, the house locked and all returned to their home.

#### NOTE 4.

##### CHURCH BELLS.

The first bell put upon the old meeting-house was about 1732-3 supposed at the time to be a gift of an English gentleman by the name of Townsend. Connected with this bell, the following incident is told.

The original name of Townsend was by the Indians given as Nissaquasset, or naming particularly the hills around us they called them Nissaquasset Hills, by the English called Turkey Hills, because of the wild turkies inhabiting them.

After the township was settled it was known sometimes by the name North Town, sometimes by West Town, as being at that time the most north-westward town in the State. After its act of incorporation it took the name of Townsend, after the name of an English gentleman, who in consideration of the fact, presented the





town with a bell for their meeting-house, weighing 3,500 lbs. But being put into the hands of treacherous men for conveyance, it never reached Townsend; but in its stead one weighing only about 1200 lbs. The original gift was sold in Boston and was used on the old church in Brattle Square till it was cracked, when it was re-cast by Mr. Holbrook.

The same bell that was used on the first house was put up also on the second house in 1770, also when that house was moved to the Centre in the year 1804, the same bell was used until cracked in the year 1818 when a new bell weighing about 1500 lbs. was purchased by subscribers, the old one being sold in part pay for the new one. This bell, after the church property passed into the hands of the Unitarians was removed by them to their new meeting-house at the Harbor; and subsequently sold to pay the debts of their society.

The bell now used on the brick meeting-house weighing near 2,000 lbs. was purchased by subscribers at a cost of between four and five hundred dollars.

#### NOTE 5.

The building of the first meeting-house was not a means of pecuniary profit to the builders, as we find on the town records, June 17, 1733, the following vote: "voted to allow Henry Parker and Henry Richardson who built the meeting-house, the sum of fifteen pounds to ease their hard bargain in building said meeting-house to be paid to them out of the proprietor's stock."

#### NOTE 6.

The Church Covenant and Articles of Faith now in use were adopted about the year 1842.

#### NOTE 7.

##### GIFTS.

The sacramental furniture at present in use, consisting of two flagons, ten cups, two plates and baptismal basin was purchased by the legacy of one hundred dollars from Dea. Daniel Adams, at his request.

The clock in the towers of the brick meeting-house, was the gift of Dea. Joel Adams and son, at a cost of three hundred and seventy-five dollars.

The clock on the singer's gallery was the gift of Miss Lucy Stone, at a cost of fifty dollars.







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MAY 75



N. MANCHESTER,  
INDIANA

